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The
Immortals
and other
Poems



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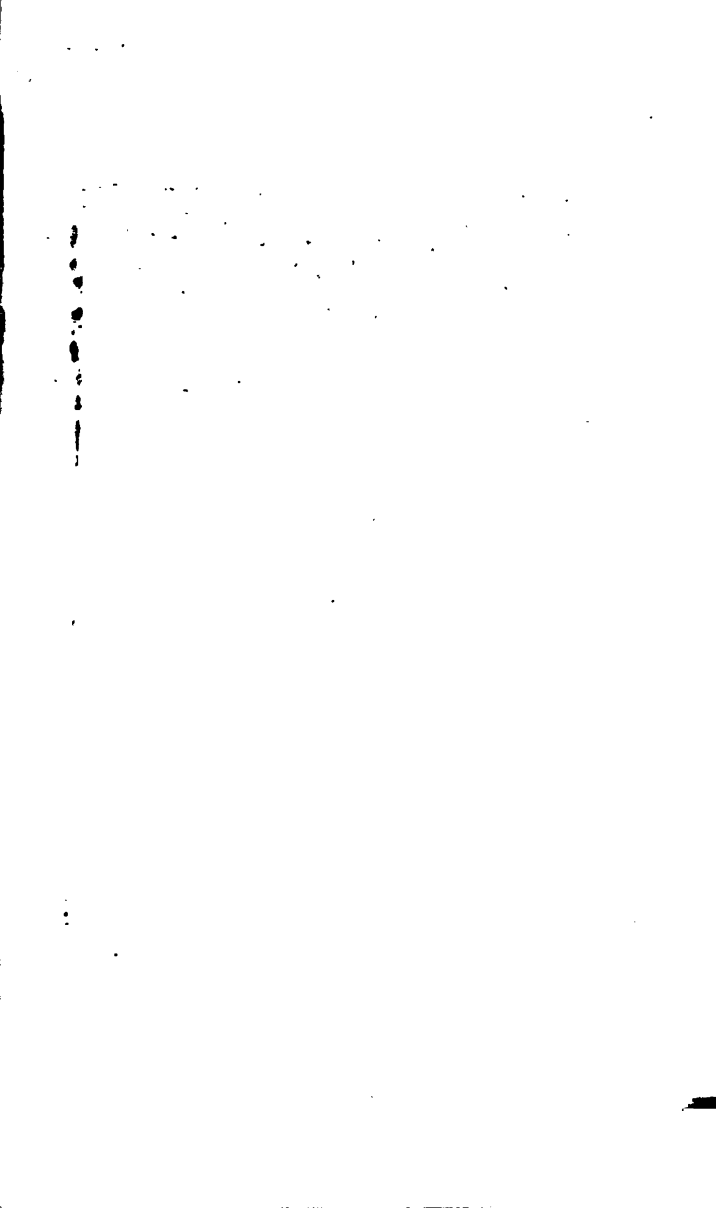


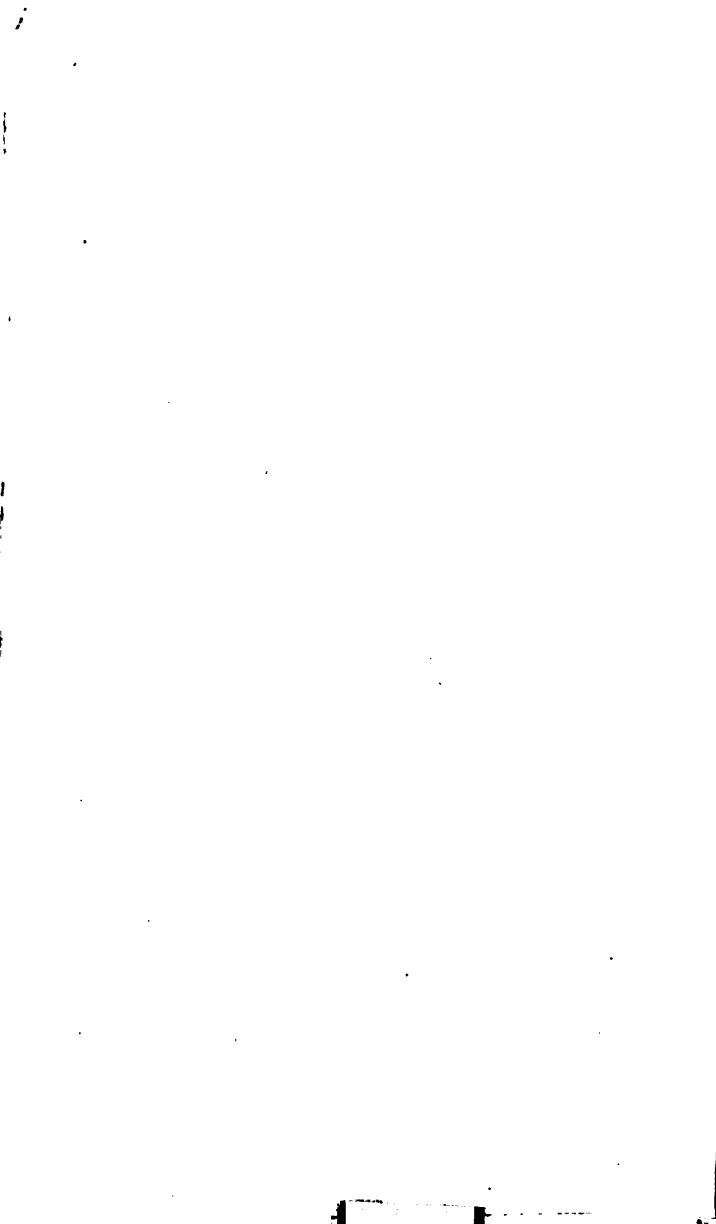
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THE IMMORTALS
AND OTHER POEMS



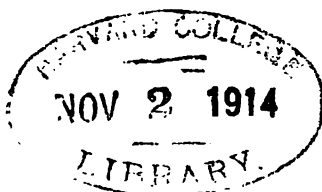
The Immortals

And Other Poems

By
R. WARWICK BOND

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
MDCCCXC

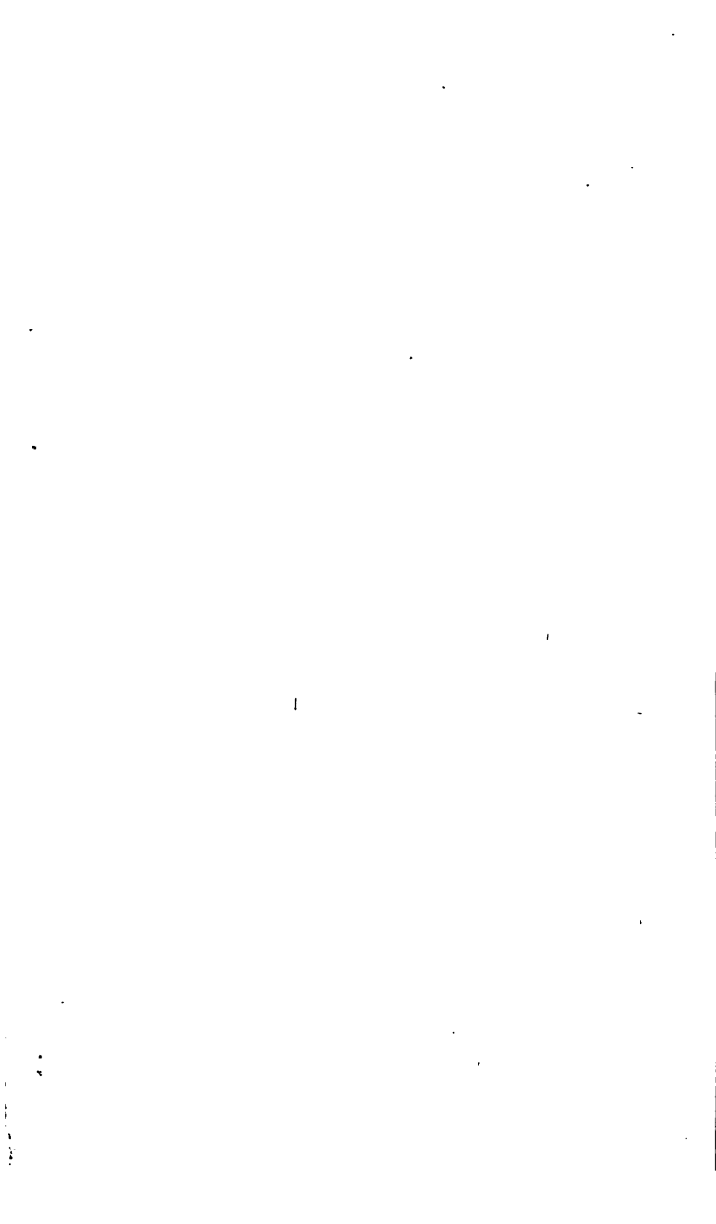
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THE IMMORTALS

"Ils règnent tous ensemble, non sur des trônes que la main des hommes peut renverser, mais en eux-mêmes, avec une puissance immuable. . . . Ils ne portent pas ces vains diadèmes dont l'éclat cache tant de craintes et de noirs soucis; les dieux mêmes les ont couronnés de leurs propres mains avec des couronnes que rien ne peut flétrir."

FÉNELON.



PREFATORY NOTE.

THE mode of treatment adopted in the following poem claims, perhaps, a word or two of explanation. In the debate here imagined among the *Dii Majores* of poetry, it was the Author's design that, while each speech should fairly represent the poet to whom it was allotted, it should also reflect the spirit of the times to which, whether as cause, product, or accompanying condition, he belonged. In pursuance of this double object the former idea has been, generally, subordinated to the latter; and sometimes an attitude is attributed to a poet more positive than is actually traceable in his written work. This is especially the case with the third speaker, Dante; whose utterance must be taken to represent the spirit of Middle-Age monasticism, rather than any views peculiarly his own. Similarly, the words put into the mouth of the sixth speaker, Goethe, do not pretend to represent, even cursorily, the work of so comprehensive a thinker. They refer chiefly to the debate in progress; expressing, like those allotted to Shakspeare, a reaction from the spirit that "leans" too much "on heaven" to a more mundane philosophy: yet, in their deprecation of

deep religious discussion, and in their call to man to exercise his faculties of observation, they are, the Author thinks, faithfully reflective of the great German, who is selected as a type of the scientific and revolutionary spirit of European intellect at that epoch. Throughout, the speeches are intended to be—as the poets themselves, in their life and work as a whole, actually were—typical of their times; in fact, to borrow a well-known sentence from a Greek historian—*ὥς δ' ἂν ἰδόντων ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῃ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ὑμπάσεως γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.*

The suggestion of the poem, as well as its metre—used once or twice again in the present volume—is taken from some beautiful verses by Cardinal Newman, familiar to readers of the *Lyra Apostolica*. They occur in the series called “Saints Departed,” under the special title of “Rest,” and are here given.

REST.

They are at rest :

We may not stir the heaven of their repose

By rude invoking voice, or prayer address

In waywardness to those

Who in the mountain grotts of Eden lie,

And hear the fourfold river as it murmurs by.

They hear it sweep
In distance down the dark and savage vale;
But they at rocky bed, or current deep
Shall never more grow pale;
They hear, and meekly muse, as fain to know
How long untired, unspent, that giant stream shall flow.

And soothing sounds
Blend with the neighbouring waters as they glide;
Posted along the haunted garden's bounds
Angelic forms abide,
Echoing, as words of watch, o'er lawn and grove
The verses of that hymn which Seraphs chant above.



THE IMMORTALS.

THE year was full :
The sheaves were carried ; and the harvest-mirth
Was half-forgotten in the dreamy lull
That comforts patient Earth
In late September, when the misty dawn
Comes with more languorous grace across the forest-lawn.

On a still day
I wandered in a woody shoreward glen,
Musing what fathomless dim secrets lay
About the life of men :
And, at the noon, my wondering sense was blest
With sight of bards long dead, and joys they now possessed.

In a deep nook
Of Paradise, whose silence was unstirred
Save by low murmurings born of falling brook,
Or floating breeze, or bird
Sweeter than earthly, lay the lords of Mind,
On beds of asphodel and amaranth reclined.

'Twas such a time
In Heaven as had been evening upon Earth ;
Milder than mellows in Italian clime,
Or summer brings to birth
There, where the marble panted Phidias' dream,
Or Plato mused and talked in groves of Academe.

And such a calm
Lay on that mighty presence, as on those
Who hear the warring themes of some high psalm
Blend in a perfect close ;
Theirs was that full content—a happy trance
No passion might disturb, no promised boon enhance.

Their earthly lot
Was bitter struggle—throes of heartfelt pain,
A voice that cried to men who heeded not,
Hope's splendid vision, vain
Self-torturings—rich freight in vessels frail,
Quivering at each light breath, yet fronting every gale.

Ever their spirit
Did battle 'gainst the fiends of lust and crime
With lightning sword of words that shall inherit
A kingdom beyond Time ;
Yet blamed the weapon's weakness, and confessed
The pain of crippled truth and beauty half-expressed.

They wearied not :
They felt a god within, a power that drove
Forth from their stammering lips the surging thought
Whose depth with utterance strove ;
Till opened the dark gates, and borne on wings
Of slumbrous trance they passed, and woke to find them
kings !

If now they bend
Toward the dim precinct of their sojourn sad,
They hear their names in deepening pæan ascend,
And for Earth's sake are glad ;
Not for themselves—their bliss on that fair shore
Needs not man's late acclaim : their worth was theirs before.

From where they lay
Sloped down, in field on field of vaporous white,
A vista to the earth, whence far away
Came wandering up the height
Voices ; and by that gulf they might espy
The world's great pageant pass of pomp and misery.

There might they see,
Each from his fragrant couch of deathless flowers,
Man's spirit working out his destiny
'Mid crash of warring powers ;
And there with sacred joy might note the seed
Themselves had sown break forth in bright heroic deed.

They watched fair worth
Faint in the sweet embracements of desire :
They marked the throes of spiritual birth ;
They saw the heaven-sent fire
Lighten in splendour o'er that lurid field,
Heartening the foes of Sense, that 'neath her onset reeled.

They watched men dress
Their vileness till in virtue's garb it shone ;
They saw them test the hero by success,
And lacquey wealth : anon
Some Titan, destined their bright seat to share,
Thundered o'er land and sea his accents of despair.

Long did they gaze
On that vast drama with compassionate eyes,
And marked man's recklessness with mute amaze,
And mused Life's mysteries
In silence ; until, stirring, one did break
The conclave's august calm, and beckoned as to speak.

Well might I guess
His name and station 'mongst those mighty ones,
The Eldest of the Bards ! I saw his face
Resplendent as the sun's
When, through the curtains of the mist upcurled,
He breaks, and first reveals the wonder of the world.

Stately he rose :

It seemed as though a hush fell wide o'er Heaven !

No whisper broke the awe of that repose :

And to my lot 'twas given

To hear—nor yet by death to expiate

Such privilege—that pearl and paragon of debate !

“Ye see,” he said,

“What restless and unhappy mood is man's !

Dull sorrow at his heart, and in his head

A whirl of feverish plans !

Who deemed too strait the freedom Nature gave,

Bows in invisible chains, his customs' witless slave.

“Dullard ! to spend

Life's little moment in the empty chase

Of wealth, or over the crabbed letters bend,

Deeming the hard-won grace

Of bookmen's grudging applause an ampler meed

Than the flushed life that waits on each heroic deed.

“Feebly and slow

Trickles Life's current in an hundred streams,

That once, downrushing from the mountain's brow

Leapt in the morning's beams

Joyous, resistless ! Earth is wide as then,

And Nature not less fair : what plague has fallen on men ? ”

He ceased ; and round
The circle an assenting murmur went,
As, faint from cavernous glacier-depth, a sound
To upper air is sent
Of waters thundering through the gloom below
To bear o'er fainting lands a blessing from the snow.

But ere it ceased
One rose, as half-reluctant from his place,
Whose eyes a pensive gentleness expressed,
A pure and lofty grace
Whose bearing ; and, or e'er his lips began,
My faint, too-happy spirit had felt the Mantuan.

But when he spoke
—Oh ! not with this rude utterance !—an unknown
And peerless harmony the silence broke,
Whose sweetness might disown
The far-off cadence of the summer seas
That chant at eve a burthen fraught with memories.

“ Not fierce and keen,
As when in thunder from the rocks it sprung,
Flows the great River, yet 'neath forests green,
And fattening herds among ;
Where the bleak desert nursed the thankless thorn,
Man piles the orchard-spoil and reaps the ripened corn.

“ If taint and soil
Infect the limpid current as it rolls,
If some for greed, and some for grossness toil,
Yet are there finer souls
Who fence them in a sweet magnanimous calm,
Who grasp the spacious Thought, and pluck a kinglier palm.

“ Not now by fear
Man's life is ruled : he learns an ampler creed ;
He wins him laurels in a nobler sphere
Than rash impulsive deed ;
Not blindly, now, not hopelessly he dares,
But, hardening his firm will to sterner purpose, bears.

“ In this repose
Of fettered passion how is fancy warmed !
What shapes, what hues, engendered in the close
Thought, and by Art informed,
Glow from the pencil, from the chisel breathe,
And round the inventive brain their rapturous garland
wreathe !

“ Nor all for praise
His patience toils to gather Learning's fruit :
Not less for scorn, for unawarded bays,
Deaf ears, and voices mute,
He labours in the harvest of that lore
That makes his violence less, his virtue, haply, more.

“ And if, for some,
Earth wear a commoner glory than of old,
If gods no more in guise of mortals come,
No more the perfect mould
Of Venus dazzle, nor Apollo fire,
Nor the wild upland thrill with Dian’s white-foot choir ;

“ Yet is man cheered
By a new message, such strange comfort bringing
As makes him covetous of pains he feared !
Ay ! there are voices, ringing
From realms undreamed of by his eye’s dull scope,
Bid him discount all toils, medicine all griefs, with hope.”

His accents died ;
He sat—and o’er the assembly a low storm
Of approbation swept : then at his side
Uprose a sombre form
That wandered far on earth, and farther yet,
—Past those eternal bounds where bliss and tears are set.

A calm severe,
An intense meditation in his face
Was visible : Heaven might not sole appear,
Even now, in whom a trace
Of the old piteous yearning lingered yet,
And stirred the passionate heart that could not all forget.

" I would not seem,"
He said, " to stand o'ermuch at difference
With my most constant tutor ; yet I deem
That an o'erweening sense
Of powers in man, of grace in cloud or tree,
May blind the struggling soul to loftier mystery.

" Scarce can I think
Their energies a boon to human-kind :
These arts, these toils, are forging, link by link,
An iron chain for Mind ;
Fettering to earth with gross material ties
The winged ethereal spirit that should have sought the skies.

" Not in the brain
Shall men find solace for their miseries ;
Life's fever burns unquenched for all the train
Of reasoned subtleties :
The philosophic draught to which they fly
But moistens the parched throats it cannot satisfy.

" All that man feels,
Dreams, dares, and executes, remains but man ;
The spider's idle spinning 'twixt the wheels
Of a gigantic plan,
So swift and smooth along its pathway hurled,
Its motion is unfelt—the web becomes the world.

“ Must he forget,
Because his grosser raptures are outgrown,
How in his innermost still heart are set
Sanctities not his own ?
Small cause has his idolatry for pride
In that it bows to brain, not senses deified !

“ Was he not taught,
Ere yet those earlier altars lacked their flame,
New lessons ?—thrilled the world with one sweet thought !
A gracious Presence came !
Touched the seared heart, medicined the shrinking sore,
Reared its unselfish Sign, and left man Faith once more.

“ Why should he need
Pleasures that are but granted to be lost,
Fleeting and frail as the light thistle-seed
On the sirocco tossed ?
The moment's joy, the momentary lust,
What boots it to the worm that grovels in the dust ?

“ Nay, let him crave
Life's thread with bitterest sorrows to entwine,
That God may cleanse and purge the spirit He gave
By discipline divine :
Let his submission deem itself too blest
If Heaven accord at length its hardly hoped-for rest.”

He made an end :

But, as they heard, the immemorial strife
Of awe, will, passion—those deep tones that blend
Their thunder into Life,
Its far-off echoes in remembrance woke,
And for a space no voice the solemn stillness broke.

And I grew wroth

Who heard, like them, that multitudinous chime,
And saw the wrecks of huge abortive growth
That strew the sands of Time,
As though some purposeless blind pulse did waste
Earth's vast heroic toils, that shall no harvest taste.

While thus I mused,

One spake whose utterance made mistrust a scorn ;
As, on the thought perplexed and ear confused,
From the wild fugue is born
A measured certainty of glorious song
That sweeps the spirit in its triumphant march along.

And at his voice

The dark-leaved glossy bays that bound each head,
Quivering, bespake the mute consentient choice
Of those they chapleted ;
And far in Heaven, methought, a delicate rose
Flushed o'er the listening heights and thrilled their conscious
snows.

Ay ! such a glow,
Such happy transport blessed that radiant sphere
As brightest hours of earth's dull scene not know ;
Neither may mortal ear
Taste that melodious paradise of speech,
Nor choicest poet-vein to more than slander reach.

"Surely," he said,
"Something too narrowly our brother deems
Of that benignant Power whose bounty shed
Joy on the morning's beams,
And bade His teeming world full life express,
Proposing as man's best instructor, happiness.

"The lark's song lost
In heaven, the glad waves plunging to the shore,
The icy glories on the mountains tossed,
The vast exultant roar
Of wind-swept forests—such an anthem raise
As bids man stand erect and emulate their praise.

"On him profuse
Was poured the wealth of Thought's unvalued dower :
Why lock those rich activities from use
Because short-lived their power ?
Why muse mistrustful of God's hidden ends
Because their scope sometimes his levelling transcends ?

“ Shall he sit down
With folded hands in motionless despair
Because some early roses are o'erblown?
Because the dream was fair
That blessed his slumbers in the night outworn,
Owes he no praise for day, no canticle for morn?

“ Nay, let him take,
And nobly use, his life's allotted sand;
Nor of its problems sloth's dull pretext make,
Nor doubt the potent Hand
That can constrain the event that seems to swerve
Most wide from its designs, their plenitude to serve.

“ Let him not change
His natural joy for rigours of the cell,
Nor bribe his spirit with Heaven's expected range,
Nor terrify with Hell:
His to be man, not mystic—meet Life's test,
Not mar, by shunning: God provides His labourers rest.”

He that hath stood
To mark from Pincian height Day's sinking fire
Enkindle, ere he take the Tyrrhene flood,
Grove, garden, dome, and spire,
And felt such loveliness by speech profaned,
Knows why, until he ceased, such breathless silence reigned:

Then—who hath been
In our dear England while the tardy Spring
Loitered for weeks, and, deep in May, hath seen
The whole land blossoming,
And blest that rich fulfilment of desire,
May guess what rapturous hint possessed the immortal choir !

Thou peerless one !
If to thy large indulgent sense may pierce
—As far faint planet to its parent sun
Glints homage—this poor verse,
Pardon its stammering gratitude : the debt
Collective Mind not pays, shall one weak spirit forget ?

—A mood more staid
Blent with the circle's happiness, as flies
O'er August's laughing corn the cloudlet's shade :
'Twas as if Paradise
Owned the faint memory of Earth's harsher laws,
And knew her deepest bliss not all exempt from pause.

And in his tone
Who followed, was the echo of a strife,
The voice of questionings persistent grown,
With mightiest issue rife ;
The musical low thunder of the deep,
Within whose breast profound unuttered secrets sleep.

Lofty his mien ;
From his whole bearing breathed the inherent sense
Of dignity, and fitness for that scene,
Commanding reverence :
Not blind, now ! in those orbs there shone the light
Of worth that has endured, and holds its crown of right.

“ I not desire
To cavil at those rich persuasive strains ;
Rather I wish their animating fire
More general : remains
This danger yet, that in such joyous creed
Insidious poison mix, and freedom license breed .

“ Man should so joy
As not forgetting trouble—should so work
As fearful lest his great Taskmaster spy
Where flaws unheeded lurk :
So hope, think, purpose, live, as though each breath
Were but the unclaimed dues and charity of death.

“ Needs must he share
The chance of that perpetual conflict waged
’Twixt good and evil : let him take due care
His arm be not engaged
Other than nobly ; let his conscience fight
His ally, careful still her noonday be not night.

“ Yet let him see

His thought, deed, utterance, be a man's—not cowed !

The truth God teaches him let him speak free,

Unshrinkingly, aloud !

His body may confess a tyrant's reign,

A crowd's intemperate wrath ; his soul they cannot chain.”

Followed applause ;

And long ensuing silence seemed to range

All that was uttered heretofore : the pause

Was big with mighty change.

An easier fashion, a more careless grace,

Was his who rose up next, a smile upon his face.

“ We ponder long,”

He said, “ these grievous questions. He who knows

But half of life will limit Right and Wrong

Sharply, as truceless foes :

More knowledge breeds more doubt. For me, the line
Shifts with the shifting age—not easy to define.

“ All thought is slave

To modes of thought. Man climbs a toilsome height

To peer through clouds ;—explores a deeper cave,

And boasts a clearer sight !

And, so he find free passage for his mind,

O'erlooks the unconscious bent, the bias that inclined.

“ Were he not wise
To leave Heaven’s shadowy dream for Being and Birth ?
To quit the prospect of the unfathomed skies
And turn his gaze to earth ?
Embrace with fuller grasp that physical frame,
And ask, not whither bound, but how and whence he came ?

“ Earth is a feast
Of beauty—let him banquet on that sight ;
Woman a peerless draught—be his to taste
That exquisite delight :
By happiness, by labour, let him praise
His Author, following not the Future’s pathless ways.

“ Treasure is strewed,
With clay and offal mingled, in his path ;
Let him make order in that chaos rude :
Brave faculties he hath
Of brain and sense ; with their divining-rod
Let him interrogate earth, and find, as answer, God.”

Even as he spoke,
Before me rose the vision of my kind,
Full-statured Man, as when in wrath he broke
The chains that shackled Mind,
—Laws, customs, creeds, outworn ! I saw him stand
A resolute strength, that felt his future in his hand.

I saw him seize
On Knowledge as a trumpet, whence he blew
Challenge to hoary lies and sophistries ;
I saw him fired anew
With splendid visions, and the youthful grace
Suffering had clouded, shone recovered in his face.

And, on my soul
Thus rapt, brake suddenly a tide of song
Surging from many a voice, beyond control,
'Gainst tyranny and wrong :
And Heaven's own pity strove with madness there,
And hectic loveliness illumed a black despair.

It ceased : but yet
One voice sang on, my listening ears to bless,
Calm from that tumult, laden with a freight
Of tears and tenderness ;
Telling of duty, temperance, and the hope
Whose splendour shines afar across life's darkening scope.

Others there were
Whose speech I deemed I knew ; and many more,
Mute 'mid Earth's passion, found their utterance here,
Where her insensate roar
Came not,—more sweet, perchance, as who had grown
By silence to a sense of yet more faultless tone.

But these have passed
From my remembrance. Only those Earth heard,
Hated, despised, and owned their voice at last,
My inmost being stirred
With unforgotten music, and the fear
Lest thankless man no more such minstrelsy might hear.

—There came, methought,
A movement of expectancy, the sign
Of some new rapture : not a brow but caught
A radiance more divine !
Earthwards they gazed, and in their midst left space ;
While the o'erhanging bays assumed a greener grace.

But sick at heart
I marked their ecstasy : too well I knew
That vacant room was his whose perfect art
Mingled the rose and rue,
Summoned a flawless knighthood from the dust,
Or poured melodious grief, yet crowned the hymn with trust.

Methought how bare,
How widowed of all joyaunce Earth must lie !
Vain hands I stretched in impotent despair,
And a loud bitter cry
Escaped me !—With its utterance, that fair scene
Trembled—broke—rolled away, as though it had not been !

Ay! like a dream
The pageant faded! As the burnished dyes,
Scattered profuse behind Day's flying team,
Were melting off the skies
As not worth keeping—so dissolved the spell :
While from the darkening vault majestic utterance fell :—

“Those thou hast seen
Were shadows merely. Could *they* come again,
They were unknown—altered from what had been,
Beyond a mortal's ken,
Both form and spirit : but thou may'st faintly guess,
From this poor counterfeit, their absolute happiness.

“Each, in his day,
Was as a reed through which the Eternal Voice
Blew anthems; or as finely-tempered clay
Taking a mould more choice,
From which God cast Him coffers that enshrined
Parts of Himself, and stored the wealth of human-kind.

“And every age
Has its interpreter : there cannot lack
The illumination of some poet-page
Thrown on the toilsome track
Where Man, with hope and purpose yet unbowed,
Ascends a golden stair that mounts sometimes through cloud.

“And if some voice
Fail from the choir, that thou hast learned to love,
Why dost thou sorrow? Should'st thou not rejoice
That, now, his spirit shall prove
The undreamed marvels of the depth and height,
And coast untired a shore of limitless delight?

“Mourn not for Earth
As for a comfortless, deserted queen:
She is in travail yet with many a birth
More glorious than hath been:
To lordlier triumphs must her harps be strung,
And the vast Pæan to be surpass all hymns yet sung.

“Mid varying cheer
Moves everlastingly the march of Mind,
Now straining dimly toward another sphere,
And now to earth inclined:
No stage is wasted, not a voice is lost;
The bridge forms many a span ere yet the gulf be crossed.

“The immortal soul
Surrenders not her trust. Patient, indued
With a proud calm that owns not the control
Of Earth's vicissitude,
She quaffs the elixir of a quenchless thought
Born in man's heart from God, and with His splendour
fraught.”

Then from afar
Floated faint echoes of a mighty praise ;
And deep in Heaven flushed out a glorious star !
Even as I turned to gaze,
The popped medicine of the dreamless shore ·
O'erwhelmed me, sense and brain—I slept, and knew no
more.

GROWTH.

BRIGHT with rich hues of fantasy
The germs of Thought unfold :
Amid the great net's draught we spy
A pearl of price untold :
We mined for silver patiently,
And lo ! the vein is gold !

The blood-red petals drop, and leave
A seed-bud, poor and small :
We grasp our ocean-spoil, and grieve !
'Twas broken in the haul :
Quartz, glittering quartz, our workings give ;
—No fortune there at all !

We sigh : but ere the winter snows
We pluck the ripe fruit's store :
We find where gems as white repose
Upon the deep sea-floor :
At last ! our patient picks disclose
Great nuggets of pure ore.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

'N EATH the gray cloudy pile
Breaking, soft Autumn's smile
Fires the dim forest-aisle,
Evening attesting :
Noiselessly, one by one,
Wraiths in the dying sun,
All their sweet service done,
Float to their resting.

Crimson and gold are they,
Lustrous in their decay,
Scarce may the sunset-ray
Add to their glory :
Each on its parent-bough
Burgeoned, broke, felt the glow
Of the full year ; and now—
'Tis an old story !

Wild leagues of barren sea,
Gold's senseless vacancy,
Hills whose eternity
 Hath no fruition,
Age after age remain ;
While Life and Love in vain
Dispute with Death and Pain
 Their hard condition.

Down to their grave they pass,
Leaves ! in uncounted mass
High 'mid the forest-grass
 Piling their cumber :
All they can hope, to make
Greener the bursting brake,
When the glad year shall wake
 Earth from her slumber.

Even so, our teachers say,
Leaf-like we pass away,
Hoping no fairer day :
 —All that we cherish,
Laughter of glancing eyes,
Wit with its quick replies,
Rich human sympathies,
 Ready to perish !

Scholar ! whose teeming brain
Thrilled the dead Past again,
Dream not on bed of pain
Of aught hereafter :
Soldier ! the foe who broke,
Meeting thy mortal stroke
Hark ! mid the cannon-smoke
Fate's mocking laughter !

Thee, too, whose light foot's fall
Makes my world musical,
Ushers my daybreak, shall
The blind earth cover ;
In endless clasp shall fold
Those white limbs' perfect mould,
And toy with thy hair's gold,
Thy tireless lover.

Man's mighty works abide :
Soars the cathedral's pride
Scathless, whose framer died
In far-off ages ;
Still through new decades glow
Titian and Angelo,
Still drops of pity flow
O'er Shakspeare's pages.

Wind, lightning, ocean's pride,
Slaves to his car man tied ;
Laboured, till far and wide
 Lowland and highland
Own his supremacy :
—Corn, where the wave rolled free !
—Highways beneath the sea !
 —Athos an island !

Deathless man's works ! but man,
Bound in life's little span,
Scarce may mature one plan
 In toil and sorrow ;
Hardly may run his race,
Wetting with tears his face ;
Here for a moment's space,
 Vanished to-morrow !

Vows are but idle breath :
Even while his prayer he saith,
Swoops the unswerving death
 His cord to sever :
Only one anguished cry
Strikes the un pitying sky,
Ere his cold ashes lie
 Silenced for ever.

For this our sires withstood
Chance,—blindness,—tyrant's mood,
Curbed passion's Titan-brood,
Suffered strong-hearted ;
Only that we might bear
Some lighter yoke, and share
Sweet with life's bitter, ere
We too departed ?

Intellect's godlike scope,
Will that with Fate would cope,
Boundless unconquered hope
Time's limits spurning—
These to forget their sway,
Fade with the leaf's decay,
Mix with earth's senseless clay,
Never returning ?

'Tis an old story, told
Age after age.—Behold !
Man with a trust as bold
Fronts the dread portal !
Still soul, with gaze intense,
Past the dim mists of sense,
Past reason's impotence,
Grasps the immortal !

ABSENT.

WEARILY, wearily,
 Waiteth his well-beloved when he is gone.
 Pales her fair cheek with fears she fain would hide :
 The laggard months she will not chide
 That cheat her of the tender touch and tone,
 And pass so barrenly ;
 But, unforgetful, through the village fares,
 Tarrying at each cottage door,
 Sweetly responsive as of yore
 To the long tale outpoured of others' cares.
 But in the house at eventide, alone,
 Her finger wistfully
 Tracks on the chart the perilous leagues of sea ;
 And shuddering at the winter's flaw without
 She pictures horrors in the tropic zone—
 The dead calm broken by the swift cyclone ;
 The staggering plunge ; the seamen's shout ;
 The wave-swept deck,
 The helpless wreck,

And faces heaving white beneath the moon !—
In such dark broodings sitting, anguish-tost,
Till isle and cape and continent are lost
In blinding mist, as sinks the fair brown head,
And the hot tears fall fast upon the page.

Is there no sense
Whereby two souls conjunct in sympathy
May mingle, o'er the roaring waste of sea,
In conference ?

Breathe no celestial airs that grace may lend
Our grosser limitation to suspend,
And bid us bridge the vast unmeasured space
With love's embrace ?

Gleams there no glass in heaven's o'erarching blue
Where thought may follow thought, and understand,
As when from eye to eye the message flew
And hand pressed hand ?

Wandering drear, a yet unwelcomed guest
On Fancy's twilight borders, must the heart
Still follow her imaginings apart,
Finding no rest ?

Must the drawn sigh be cast on idle wind ?
The midnight weepings, the dishevelled hair,
Bowed knees and fingers clasped in passionate prayer,
 No answer find ?

Against our prison-bars of flesh without
Vainly we beat, and fall the fruitless tear :
Till spirit soar from sense refined and clear
 We rest in doubt.

ON A MARCH MORNING.

IN darksome mood
I wandered through the meadows. Gaunt and bare
The immemorial giants of the wood
Rose through the heavy air :
All blossomless the cold dew-whitened plain
Seemed as it ne'er might wake to summer joys again.

“Fit scene,” I said,
“Fit emblem of my life that hath fulfilled
Naught of the promised good, but lieth dead
Like these !”—when, sudden, thrilled
From countless germs of being, that did lurk
Unseen in grove and field, a voice—“We wait, and work !”

HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE.

CLOUD-WREATHS ! whose crimson canopies the sun,
Say, can ye solve the problem solved by none ?
What hindrance baffles, whilst the ages run,
Man's efforts to be blest ?

Tall daughters of the forest ! that unbind
And shower your tresses on the amorous wind,
Is't yours to read the mystery our mind
Ponders in dark unrest ?

Sad minstrel ! faring over earth alone,
Is not thy melancholy undertone
Fraught with a consciousness of things unknown,
That pains thee, till expressed ?

Wild leagues of sea ! that toss 'twixt land and land
And speak in ceaseless thunder to the strand,
Hide ye the truth men cannot understand
In your o'erburthened breast ?

White faces, lit from Heaven ! your happy smile
Resolves the doubts we cannot reconcile :
Ye know, perchance, that, for Earth's little while,
Our ignorance were best.

REMEMBRANCE.

WHY is the thought of bygone things
So strong in our affection set
That, spite of pain remembrance brings,
The heart refuses to forget ?

Echoes from the dead past we hear
Pleased, while our too fond selves we blame ;
And still falls sweetly on the ear
The music of a once-loved name.

Love cannot change ; we have no choice—
Offence, shame, absence, all are vain ;
We hear at times the old dear voice,
The vanished face comes back again.

And in sad contrast, side by side
With the dark tale of later days,
Rises the life we could not chide
Ourselves for being quick to praise.

To that imagined past we link
No hint of blemish, but would preach
Silence to all reproof, and think
Only of what was best in each.

Even as the ruffled surface clears
And shows the mountain-scene congealed,
So brightens from the calm of years
The worth that erst was half concealed.

Shall we not deem such visions sent
To point the soul to fairer days ;
Pledges that from to-day's lament
God's hand shall fashion future praise ?

A bridge by which, o'er seas that roll,
We pass to shores we cannot see ?
A chain to make the broken whole,
Linking the past to what shall be ?

How may we credit that the Power,
Whose might and love with wisdom blend,
Created in a careless hour
Memory—its empty strength to spend

In fond imaginings, at strife
With that we held for truth, to cast
—And, casting, make us hate our life—
An idle glamour o'er the past ?

No ! lest the gulf should seem too strange
 'Twixt earth's half-knowledge and the true,
We bridge it o'er by Fancy's change
 To clasp in Heaven the friend we knew :

To note his more unselfish thought,
 Diviner pity, tenderer mirth,
Not wondering overmuch at aught,
 But recognizing marks of earth :

To feel the new mind's mighty scope,
 The subtler grace, the boundless lore,
Only as harvest of our hope,
 And wealth we dimly guessed before.

So, leaving idle tears o'er wraith
 Of vanished hours, as seasons go,
Remembrance reaches hands to Faith,
 Waiting the day when both shall know.

BETTWS-Y-COED.

THE vale is sweetest ! though resounds not here
The passionate sweep of Nature's grandest chord,
Her tend'rest tones are breathed in nooks made dear
By kindly human word.

Scale, thou who can'st ! the storm-swept peaks of Fame ;
Toil till each towering crag thy conquest own :
We'll pity, nestling round the household flame,
Thee, on thy heights, alone.

SUNSET.

DAY'S dying light
Makes of the West one splendour, whence are hurled
His latest shafts against the victor, Night,
Rising across the world ;
—Splendour that sinks alternate, and aspires,
As though some labouring god did fan his failing fires.

A low cloud, hung
Between, a moment tames those ardent rays ;
But in broad pathways to the zenith flung
They set all heaven ablaze ;
Enkindling the light drifts of upper air,
Kissing their folded white and waking glory there.

The veil has passed,
And from his golden tent looks forth again
The dying monarch, grandest in these last
Brief moments of his reign :
And, slowly sinking, floods the rich expanse
Of his lost realm of Earth with lingering, fondest, glance.

Most glorious Light !
Man cannot mar thy beauty by his crime ;
Thou blestest him with radiance all as bright
As in that splendid prime,
When Eden's dewy slopes at eve he trod,
And yet uncurs'd by guilt talk'd unabashed with God.

No prayer of ours,
No toil may that blest intercourse regain :
Vain Pelion piled on Ossa ! Babel's towers
Load Shinar's soil in vain !
And the rare glimpse to saint or bard allowed
Pains with its light and seems to intensify the cloud.

Man takes his lot
Of tears, and wanders restlessly from birth ;
Seeking a solace, though it comfort not,
In forced ungentle mirth :
But all his happiest moods are linked with thee,
Pure source of joy and hope to soiled humanity !

To his rapt eyes
Yon cloudy wreaths are palaces of gold,
The sinless home of blessed mysteries
And happiness untold :
Almost, the kneeling multitude he sees,
And hears the angelic hymn come floating on the breeze !

Ah ! well he knows
The shame, toil, bitterness he must inherit ;
Too oft the barren prospect of his woes
O'erbears his fainting spirit :
Yet Nature still unstained, light still outpoured,
Stand an eternal pledge of forfeit bliss restored.

—'Tis over ! dies
From the cloud-canopy each burning hue :
Gray twilight reigns, and the forsaken skies
Weep tears of silent dew :
Fades the rich tint from crested wood and wave,
And Sirius lights his lamp for vigil o'er day's grave.

All-worshipt sun !
We may not stay thee—urge thy fiery car
Where eager millions welcome, mighty one !
Thy coming from afar :
Flog those white coursers ! speed their impetuous flight,
Till thrills the expectant East, with day's new rapture bright !

SONNETS.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART :

OB. DEC. 5, A.D. 1791, ÆT. SU. 35.

"And the spirit shall return to GOD who gave it."

FAMOUS and friendless ! carried to thy rest
Without the lonely tribute of one tear,
Without one wreath laid on the snowy bier
Thou shar'dst with others, like to thee distress !
The world, that knows not its immortal guest,
Leaves thee uncared for, though with cheer on cheer
Delighted Europe hails, and flocks to hear,
Thy strains of matchless sweetness. So, 'tis best !
Best that from limits of its narrow cage
The kingly spirit, which gives but cannot take,
Should soar betimes—that naught of earth engage
Those eagle wings, nor man's hard custom break
The heart that, here, strives vainly to assuage
That thirst which none but the Divine can slake.

OBVERSE.

I SAW him pass, the Master of mankind !
Whose might I guessed not. Willing subjects bowed
Before his footsteps : no man was so proud
But trembling sued some little grace to find,
And, if he heeded not, grew pale and pined.
But I, beholding that obsequious crowd
Kneeling thus awed, was wroth and cried aloud—
“What is’t ye worship, foolish men and blind ?”

Love heard : and o’er his shoulder, as by chance,
Casting the careless conquest of one glance,
Into my soul entered such comfort sweet,
Such sudden glory broke o’er earth and sky,
I could have thrown me weeping at his feet,
And breathed my life into one happy sigh.

REVERSE.

A HAPPY lover bade a poet sing
 Love, the all-praised, his heaven-appointed theme :
 "Perchance," replied the bard, "'twould ill beseem
 The reverence due to such a mighty king !
 Perchance such anger to my lips would spring
 As should affray those languorous bowers supreme
 Where the luxurious minion sits adream,
 Loosing his careless arrows from the string.

"Bid him sing Love who suffers from a dart
 Unpoisoned—who not knows the misery
 To which this smiling lord may father be—
 Whose soul was never fettered by the chain
 Of looks that violate and lips that stain—
 Who shuts no speechless sorrow in his heart."

ALEXANDRIA :

JULY 11, 1882.

HARK ! o'er the deep unto the fort-crowned hill
Echoes a sullen thunder—hark ! again !
Telling the Lion stirs within his den,
And England wakes from sleep, a nation still !
We are not, then, mere drudges of the till,
Not idle disputants of mouth and pen,
Not artists, æsthetes, millionaires—but men !
Roar, mighty mouthpieces of England's will !
Till East and West give back your iron tone,
The deep-voiced music that was heard of yore,
That told the world the haughty Spaniard's shame,
And, later, shook the usurper on the throne
That shadowed Europe ; making Britain's name
A splendour and a strength on every shore.

UNVEILING THE GORDON STATUE :

TRAFALGAR SQUARE ; OCTOBER 16, 1888.

WE raised no cheer—we stood a silent throng,
And watched the veiling drapery fall aside,
And viewed his breathing image with a pride
That struggled with the shame of conscious wrong,
As over each man's heart, that crowd among,
Swept the remembrance of yon bitter tide
When England gathered how her hero died
Deserted, hopeless—but unshaken, strong !

We cannot make amends : we can but weep
The cold insensibility that lost
A worth the world too seldom paragon ;
And shame our sordid lives, that halt and creep
And haggle o'er each Heaven-sent impulse' cost,
By his, whose memory shall outlive the bronze.

TO THE CREWS OF THE SOUTHPORT AND
ST. ANNE'S LIFE-BOATS:

LOST IN GALLANT ENDEAVOUR TO RESCUE THE CREW OF
THE BARK, "MEXICO," ON THE NIGHT OF
THURSDAY, DEC. 9, 1886.

O UR tears would wrong you, hero-spirits ! who cast
Your lives into the ungoverned wild debate
Of wind and wave, and, whelmed beneath the weight
Of breakers roaring landwards on the blast,
From the mid hurricane to silence passed.
Tears for the world made poorer by your fate !
Tears for the wife and children desolate !
For you, great hearts ! no idle grief we waste :
Seeing, to brave men, Death is as a bride
Won by long wooing, in whose arms they sleep
And know no care—or harbour shut from harm,
Where the loud voices of the wintry storm
Come not, but sea-worn barks securely ride,
Locked in a spacious haven, still and deep.

DREAMS.

SLEEP on his wide o'ershadowing pinions bears
Rich freight of musical imaginings ;
Now breathing vast heroic strife that flings
A fiery lustre of great deed o'er years
That pass in splendid pageant : Fancy veers
While yet the brain with trumpet-echoes rings,
And harps a strain of tenderest, holiest, things
That loosens all our nature into tears.

But with the daybreak flies the enchanted song,
To some untroubled happier region borne ;
And life shows desolate as ocean-strand
Where in exultant freedom, all night long,
Dashed the wild tide of sea, but ebb'd at morn,
Leaving but wind-swept pools and wastes of sand.

MIRAGE.

FIERCELY the sunlight beats the yellow waste,
Illimitable, treeless ! slow, with pain,
Totters the pilgrim where the bleaching train
Of skeletons a ghastly road has traced.
Sudden—what fancy spurs him to such haste ?
Lo ! beautiful across the burning plain
Rises a magic picture ! Sure, the brain
Reels—'tis a dream ! Yet see yon halls, embraced
By verdurous wealth of woods, how cool ! how grand !
That bend to woo the laughing lake beneath !
Even here his forehead by the breeze is fanned !
Forward he strains—forward with panting breath ;
Stoops o'er the glittering margin ; bites the sand—
And knows the Desert, knows the dark-winged death !

TO ROBERT BROWNING.

LIKE one who wakes upon a place unknown,
Where all the air is filled with subtle scent,
And none but faint illumination, lent
By swinging coloured fires, of softest tone,
Hints the wealth round him—skins profusely strown,
Persia's rare loom, a gleam of jewels blent
With the carved work—but half the cunning spent
Escapes him till the eye be keener grown :

So—Poet !—plunged in thine enchanted cave,
With groping sense its glories we discerned,
Beggared at first of half their beauty's store ;

Till, as our search a finer insight gave,
Dawned an undreamed magnificence, and burned
Clear from the pregnant gloom divinest lore.

December 26, 1887.

TIME ! to thy ruthless flail and winnowing-sieve
These gleanings are committed, chaff and grain :
Of all my toil, perchance, shall naught attain
Such niggard grace, a little while to live !
A jealous fellowship is theirs who give
Their glorious thoughts, like rushing steeds, the rein
Through the far Future's fields, and bring again
The glimmering years so faint and fugitive !

Yet swing the planets round the great Sun's throne,
Each with its tinkling chime and pulse of light :
Flutters the nestling till its wings be grown,
And casts its untuned twitterings on the night :
My spirit, at dawn, may pass the burning zone
Fraught with full song, nor doubt it sings aright.

